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# THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

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## Some Factors Affecting the Elementary English Curriculum\*

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Assistant U. S. Commissioner of Education

**F**OLLOWING the revolutionary curriculum studies which were made early in the century, directors of curriculum research in city schools and officers responsible for curriculum making have been in a state of feverish activity. Old courses of study are rapidly giving place to new. Last year the Office of Education asked city school superintendents to submit a new list of their available courses of study with the date of publication of each. Sixty-three cities responded, and by these 63 cities more than 170 courses dated 1928 or later were listed.

Courses of study in all subjects are being turned out at a remarkable rate of speed. The old courses which they replace are, many of them, not out of print but evidently those responsible for the courses of study feel that they are at least out of date and that new courses are necessary.

Certain factors are affecting these new courses of study in statements of objectives, in selection and organization of subject matter, in relative emphasis on drill, in types of exercises, in correlation with other subjects, and in other important phases.

One of the factors apparently unrelated to the English course of study but greatly affecting it, is the inclusion of new content sub-

jects in the elementary school curriculum. According to a recent study by Mr. C. H. Mann<sup>1</sup> of Teachers College in which he compares time allotments, the average time allotment for the content subjects in 444 cities was not proportionately much different in 1926 from that of the 1866 average of six cities from which figures were available. Nevertheless we know that in progressive schools throughout the country there is a continued increase of emphasis on the content subjects. Primary grades are including social studies, science, and citizenship. As one city school survey says, the social and natural sciences are coming to be regarded as the core of the primary curriculum. Intermediate and upper grades continue their emphasis on geography and history and add science, citizenship, safety education, character education, health education—all bringing in additional content to a previously somewhat bare curriculum.

During the period of introduction of these new content subjects the proportion of time devoted to language and grammar shows only a little increase in 1926 over that given to them in 1866. However, since these new content subjects demand many English activities and consequently much practice, English training is apt to become much less segre-

\*Paper presented before the Elementary Section of the National Council of Teachers of English, Cleveland, November 29, 1930.

<sup>1</sup>Mann, C. H. *HOW SCHOOLS USE THEIR TIME*. Teachers College, Columbia University, Contributions to Education, No. 333.

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gated and is apt to experience a consolidation in aim and time with those subjects which so necessarily depend upon English skills. The language period may be expected to be responsible for the initiation of certain English skills such as the selection of appropriate topics for discussion, the collection and organization of material, the preparation of an outline, the preparing of summaries, the planning of reports, just as the subjects of spelling, writing, and reading have become responsible for the initiation of skills; but the extended practice of those skills and the application in connection with subject matter is apt to be shared more and more by the subjects demanding much English activity. Therefore, it seems very probable that English, instead of taking more time may take less time, depending upon other subjects for the additional emphasis which is necessary for fixing the habits and skills initiated in language classes.

Another factor which seems to be affecting the elementary school English curriculum is the method of organization of the other courses of study. Some new courses still cling to the perpendicular, topical, textbook method of organization, but there are now and then outstanding courses which attempt to select and organize the material in terms of centers of interest, units, problems, and activities. For instance, one activity curriculum lists the following units: finding out about the tortoise; planning lunch menus; making yarn bouquets; making a garden; making an alphabet book. Another one lists these: farm life; community life; how we get our food; where people live; how people and things travel. One rather recent geography course organized the material by units: the land of the Nile; farthest North and farthest South; scattered American lands; and bridge lands of southeastern Europe. A popular book for teachers recommends organizing geography by centers of interest, such as, the work of running water, our town, the Balkan lands. These methods of organization involve the extended use of many language activities. Discussion, re-

porting, arguing, taking notes, proving, organizing, summarizing, retelling, describing, questioning—all of these language skills take a prominent place when the curriculum is organized by units, or activities, or other organizing centers. In other words, along with our emphasis on increased physical activity—constructing, illustrating, decorating, etc.—activity curricula everywhere are including much more English activity than was formerly done. Consequently the method of organization of other courses of study is an exceedingly important factor affecting the new English courses of study.

As a concomitant feature of the organization of new courses comes a better functional analysis of each elementary school study. Spelling, which in former years took from 9 to 12 per cent of the day's time and apparently outranked practically every other subject except language, arithmetic, and reading, has now been reduced by an analysis of its functions, difficulties, and improved techniques to a very limited time emphasis on the program. Arithmetic, about which we know so much more in terms of uses and difficulties, is also tending to be reduced in time emphasis. Functional grammar rather than structural grammar has been stressed by practically every committee report of the professional association of English teachers since 1913. This functional analysis of subjects has affected the English curriculum, as is shown by statements of aims.

One recent English text says, "Keep ever before them the aim of securing mastery in speech and writing." Another series of textbooks is entitled, "Speaking and Writing English." Other texts continually emphasize the point that English has as its proper function the development of accuracy and fluency of expression, both in speaking and writing. The acceptance of this point of view immediately turns the searchlight upon certain elements which have formerly been included in the English course, such as picture study and literature. Picture study was originally included in the English course in order to add

something to talk about. As the course became more prolific with content this very element of limited bit of content tended to be subtracted from the English responsibility and added to the art responsibility where it seems normally to belong. Many people are coming to feel that there is as much reason to put literature with geography, with history, or with science, as to put it with language. Literature contributes to language in that it offers inspiration and example. Literature contributes to geography in that a nation, a race, or a locality can not be adequately understood except by reading some of the best literature written about it or contributed by it. History too depends upon literature for the vivid and accurate building of backgrounds. With this better understanding of the contributions which literature is to make there seems to be a widespread tendency to differentiate literature from language and to give it a separate emphasis in curriculum and program making. In this way, the functional analysis of elementary school subjects is affecting the language curriculum.

Another center of feverish activity in this country is in textbook production. We turn out textbooks in greater numbers than does any other country in the world. In many cases they show the status of the teaching of the subjects which they present, in that they are built upon the best available statements of objectives, the results of research, and the experience of teachers, supervisors, and children in using the subject matter being presented.

A study of the development of textbooks would show still another important factor affecting the English curriculum. Textbooks have more and more taken over the responsibility of assigning the lessons and directing the study. No small part of the work of writing a textbook nowadays is preparing the study exercises. Doctor Osburn in his analysis of the study exercises presented in history textbooks shows us a wide range of language activities. Exercises have changed from an almost single emphasis upon questions and

answers to such exercises as these: Tell the story of Washington's long journey to the French fort; Imagine yourself a near friend of James Wolf and tell why you like him; Write a diary of an imaginary Roman soldier during the period of the great invasions; How would you build a pyramid with modern machinery?; Try to write the newspaper story of the Battle of Bunker Hill.<sup>2 3</sup> These are history assignments and yet the connection between them and the English period is easily seen. Such exercises as these are direct motivation for the development of technique in the language period, and in turn offer wide opportunities for practice in the skills being initiated through the language period. Language textbooks, too, are being influenced by the changing attitude toward English and are helping to change the point of view of many language teachers. An analysis by Dr. Elizabeth Whitmore Baker<sup>4</sup> of the development of English language textbooks in the United States includes 326 textbooks published since 1843. In this analysis she charts certain tendencies by periods of a decade since the 1840's and summarizes her findings in this way:

1. The child of today has more variety in the kinds of English exercises than has any child that went before.
2. He has less grammar to learn.
3. He has less writing to do.
4. He has more training in oral use of the language.
5. He has less to say about objects.
6. He has less memorizing to do than any child since the eighties.
7. He writes and talks less about pictures than any child since the nineteen-hundreds.
8. He gets more training for the situations of life than any child ever got before.

It may not be wise, but it is often true that courses of study are built either to fit texts or so that texts can be used satisfactorily with

<sup>2</sup>Gordy, W. F. LEADERS IN MAKING AMERICA.

<sup>3</sup>Knowlton, D. C. HISTORY AND THE OTHER SOCIAL STUDIES.

<sup>4</sup>Baker, Elizabeth Whitmore. THE DEVELOPMENT OF ELEMENTARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS IN THE UNITED STATES. George Peabody College for Teachers, Contribution to Education No. 45. p. 76.

them. The changing textbooks then are a factor affecting the present-day English courses.

Still another factor which affects not only English courses but all new courses of study, is our better knowledge of the social, economic, and intellectual backgrounds of pupils and our better understanding of what such knowledge has to do with their school work. This better understanding of the backgrounds of pupils manifests itself in a number of ways—in different types of arithmetic problems for certain localities, in a recognition of types of stories suited to different ages, in adaptations in a science curriculum for certain localities, in reading vocabularies planned for pupils of certain nationality backgrounds, and so on. It is just as true in English as in other subjects that what children need to know oftenest, what they will use most, what they will have difficulty in learning, what they will make most mistakes in doing, what they will need most practice to perfect, are all influenced by social, economic, and intellectual backgrounds of the learners. Any curriculum must take this into account.

One analysis of English uses includes the following: ability to record accurately the proceedings of a meeting; knowledge of the importance of giving credit for quoted material; habit of noting the date and occasion when taking notes from a lecture; ability to make a bibliography; making announcements. It is easy to see that these items vary in importance to pupils of different localities, of different social backgrounds, of different intellectual attainments, of varying interests, and of different economic situations. An effective English curriculum must recognize these varied backgrounds and it is interesting to see that this recognition is resulting in differentiated courses of study for elementary pupils. These are a few of the recent differentiated courses or studies reported: English for the foreign-born, from Detroit; speech correction, from Minneapolis; the correction of stammering and defective phonation, from Des Moines; functional English for children of Mexican parentage, from

El Paso; English for slow-learning groups in grade 10-B, from Denver; English for seventh and eighth grades of vocational schools in New York state; the oral English of a Ghetto group, from Pittsburgh. These are only a few indications that curriculum makers are devising multiple courses instead of single courses in English.

A final factor which is having much to do with curriculum building is the extended research concerning the English problem. Doctor Lyman of Chicago is contributing a very great service in compiling the research studies bearing on English. As in other subjects of the elementary curriculum these research studies analyze little by little the intricate problems of selection and organization of subject matter, provision for drill, development of techniques, and provision of testing materials, and thus contribute directly to the worth of the English curriculum.

This is not, needless to say, a complete list of the factors affecting our elementary English curriculum. Other well-known ones come to mind, such as the emphasis urged by high-school teachers of English, the demands of foreign-language teachers, the criticisms of employers of our eighth-grade graduates, the current interest in and emphasis on creative writing, the many new positions and professions which depend for success upon skill in using the English language. All of these are factors greatly affecting our objectives and methods in teaching English. However, some of the factors which at the present time seem to be exerting considerable influence are those which have here been analyzed: (1) the inclusion of new and more content material in the elementary school curriculum; (2) new methods of organizing courses of study, demanding extended language usage; (3) better functional analysis of elementary school subjects; (4) changes in textbooks which enlarge the applications of language ability; (5) better knowledge of the backgrounds of pupils and its application to curriculum making; and (6) continuing research in language and related fields.

# A Criterion for a Course of Study in the Mechanics of Composition\*

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THE acceptance of the social utility theory as a philosophy lying back of the construction of the course of study forces a recognition of the fact that an analysis of social usages must determine its content. In general, this has been true in most elementary school fields. For example, the general recognition of the fact that the majority of the actual reading done by an adult or by a child outside of school situations is actually of the silent reading type has definitely influenced instruction in this subject in that direction. The work of Gray, Judd, Horn, and others has specifically emphasized this point of view. It is also well illustrated in the case of the development of modern spelling vocabularies. It has now become a matter of common practice to turn to the writing of adults as the main source for the spelling curriculum.

It may not be out of order to point out here that in all such cases of the application of this social utility theory there appears to be a rather definite point of limitation for it. If social usage is to constitute the major basis for the curriculum, it means that in the long run the analysis of adult activities will reveal only a picture of the present status of adult activities. In the event that the field is one over which adults have insufficient control, the resulting curriculum will be inadequate. If education is to function properly it will be necessary for the course of study to look beyond present abilities, attitudes, and ideals, for the basic units of the course of study. This appears to be particularly true in the case of the language skills.

There appears to be a rather definite basis for the opinion among certain investigators in the field of elementary English that an analysis of social usage may not be taken as a suitable basis for the curriculum. In general the reasons for this position are that many adults are limited in their abilities to use skills essential to writing, and furthermore that the majority of adults do not know what correct usages and practices are. It seems, therefore, that elementary English undoubtedly represents one field in which there are distinct limitations to the application of this general theory of curriculum construction.

This subject is not only unduly complicated by the absence of definite goals and standards but there appears to be much uncertainty as to the adequacy of criteria determining certain usages. So long as a language usage situation remains a debatable issue the problem of curriculum construction in elementary English will be particularly complicated. So long as it is true, as it now appears to be, that there are wide differences in the practices of so-called authorities in such a definite field as punctuation, it seems obvious that some definite criterion or standard of usage must be developed. This paper is a brief report of an attempt to establish such a definite criterion for the guidance of those interested in setting up specific instructional units in one limited phase of language activity—the mechanics of written composition. The particular material presented in this report deals somewhat exclusively with certain punctuation practices. It is hoped that defensible criteria for other phases of this subject may gradually be made available.

\*This is an abstract of a paper presented before the Elementary Section of the National Council of Teachers of English, Cleveland, November 29, 1930.

Prior to the attempt to establish this criterion the following specific standards which must be met by the criterion itself were set up:

(1) This criterion must be defensible in terms of social utility. That is to say, the specific units of instructional material incorporated in the course of study as a result of this point of view must have the sanction of social usage.

(2) The resultant instructional units must be truly representative of best practice. This standard in itself implies the acceptance of a criterion sufficiently rigid to eliminate all faulty or highly debatable practices regardless of their social frequency.

(3) The criterion must be reasonably specific and objective. It must be based upon such definite material that any one can check the material upon which it is based and come out with the same results as those reported here.

(4) It must set up in definite form standards of practice.

(5) It must afford a basis for the evaluation of the relative importance of these instructional items.

A careful survey of these standards leads one to the conclusion that there is after all only one source to which one may turn for such a criterion. For such ultimate standards in the tool skills in English we are forced to turn to individuals, who are spending a major part of their time and effort in the actual application of the practices involved. For specific guidance in determining what punctuation skills constitute desirable ultimate goals one would naturally turn to the editorial departments of large publishing houses. The authors of textbooks in elementary English themselves appear to be far from agreement with respect to these basic practices. One is almost forced to the conclusion that if the editorial departments of great publishing houses do not know what practices are desirable it is doubtful if any one does. It is firmly believed that the consensus of opinion

of persons who are continually meeting these situations, rather than the mass opinion of teachers or the inevitable variety of judgments of adults who write occasionally or even the interests of children themselves, affords us the best picture of what is correct usage. Moreover, it is doubtful if the interests of children should be given very serious consideration in the determination of ultimate standards for tool skills. It is conceivable, however, that pupil interests should have a distinct bearing upon the materials presented for appreciation purposes and upon the final grade placement of many of these tool skill items.

The specific approach to the collection of the material for these ultimate standards in the field of punctuation was made by requesting twenty-six well known publishing houses to furnish the names of the manuals of style used by their editors. Replies were received from twenty-five companies stating that they were using their own handbooks or naming the book or books used as their criterion. From this list, seven manuals of style were selected as best representing the guides used by these editorial departments. The manuals were carefully and minutely analyzed for the purpose of showing the specific punctuation practices which receive emphasis. Each specific punctuation rule and exception of the rule was checked as to the books in which it appeared.

A summary of this tabulation shows the punctuation practices which are of major importance in terms of their frequency of mention in the seven handbooks. Such a summary affords a very clean-cut answer to the specific standards to be met by this criterion. Practices which are presented in these handbooks with high frequency undoubtedly represent material of distinct social utility. These same materials also must be truly representative of best practices since they themselves are the guides followed by specialists in this field who by virtue of their positions are most likely to influence prevailing practice. The seven handbooks themselves afford an

objective basis for the criterion. The relative frequencies with which specific usages are mentioned afford a direct basis for the evaluation of the importance of certain items.

The accompanying table, summarizing the frequencies with which these punctuation skills are presented, shows that there are 124

books should receive emphasis, a very much simpler instructional situation is revealed. As a matter of fact only 57 of the 124 items (45.9%) appear in four or more of the manuals analyzed. With such a limitation placed upon the items the mastery of a fairly small number of punctuation situations is

TABLE SUMMARIZING THE FREQUENCIES WITH WHICH CERTAIN PUNCTUATION ITEMS ARE PRESENTED IN THE SEVEN MANUALS OF STYLE<sup>1</sup>

	Number of Books in Which Item is Found							Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Period	5	1	2	1	0	5	0	14
Interrogation Point	1					2	1	4
Exclamation Point						1	1	2
Comma	11	6	4	7	3	4	3	38
Quotation	8	1	0	2	2	1	0	14
Colon		1	2	3	3			9
Semicolon		2	2	4	1			9
Apostrophe		1			1	1	1	4
Brackets	4	2	1				1	8
Parentheses	2	1	1		1	1		6
Dash	5	3	1	2	3	2		16
								124

<sup>1</sup>The original material on which this tabulation is based will be available in published form in the near future.

specific punctuation skills listed as a result of this analysis of style manuals. Thirty-eight of these situations are presented by the comma, 16 by the dash, 14 by quotation marks, 14 by the period, etc.

Of the fourteen specific skills involving the period, five are mentioned in only one book each. Doubtless these are somewhat highly specialized usages. On the other hand five of the fourteen skills are mentioned in six of the books. Apparently these items must represent basic practices. A similar analysis of the number of the more important practices in each punctuation skill may be made.

Since it is undoubtedly true that the 124 punctuation situations presented in this table represent the ultimate standard of accuracy in these fields it is probably unnecessary for all of these items to be included for classroom instruction in the elementary grades. Naturally those of minor importance are the ones to be excluded. If some arbitrary limit is taken such as the assumption that only those items which occurred in four or more of the seven

involved. It is known as a matter of fact, that it is possible for the child to learn through straight association a great many hundred spelling words, thousands of words in a reading vocabulary, and several hundred arithmetical combinations. It therefore seems not unreasonable for us to expect that the child should be able to master with a high degree of perfection these relatively few important situations involved in the proper punctuation of his written production.

It is recognized that this proposed criterion does not provide us with a satisfactory method of attack on all of the curricular problems in elementary English. Thus far we are unable to propose an adequate criterion for many language usage situations. It seems, however, that the establishment of such a criterion may be distinctly useful to those particularly interested in increasing the efficiency of instruction in certain mechanical aspects of elementary English. The acceptance of such an analysis of punctuation skills should be useful also in connection with the

# Developing a Spelling Morale

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IT IS a generally accepted fact that if children are led to understand that genuine values are to be derived, they are more willing to make a conscious effort to master subject matter. Evidence of this truth was provided by a spelling study conducted with the twenty-four children in the fourth grade of the University Elementary School at the State University of Iowa.

The teacher hoped to build up a morale resulting from the pupils' realization of the need to master completely a set task. Three methods of attack were used to arouse an increased interest in spelling. The first aim was to develop in the pupils a feeling of need for mastering the words in the fourth grade spelling list, because of the present and future value of the words in writing. Second, an attempt was made to meet individual differences in spelling ability: (1) by grouping the class and differentiating the assignment, and (2) by an individualized method of study. Finally, the third method practiced was to keep the pupils informed of their progress in order to establish their belief in the possibility of continued success. To get the purposes and methods clearly before the pupils, several discussion and study lessons were held preliminary to the regular spelling lessons. During the year similar lessons were conducted from time to time.

To make the pupils more keenly conscious of the present and future values of spelling in composition, an informal discussion was planned. The teacher aimed to make this conversation period as informal as was possible. Each child was encouraged to express an honest opinion on the questions presented and to give concrete illustrations when possible. The first question presented was, "What

difference does it make in life outside the school, whether or not one is a good speller?" The second question was, "What advantages result from being a good speller while in school?" A lively and worthwhile discussion was permitted to continue only until the major points had been made: namely, (1) that misspellings by adults often result in serious handicaps in business enterprises, especially in letter writing, (2) that not only in the ordinary friendly letter do misspellings make a bad impression but, in general, one has a tendency to rate as uneducated a person who misspells, (3) that since one's general scholarship is judged partly on the basis of spelling, penalties are often inflicted in other school subjects because of misspellings.

After the pupils had shown a positive mental set toward the present and future value of spelling needs in writing, the teacher proceeded to explain, as simply and clearly as she was able, the significance of the research upon which adequate spelling lists are based. Though the average age of the children was but nine years and two months, they were able to grasp, in a general way, the value of a scientifically devised spelling list for study. Not only were the children led to recognize that the fourth grade words were the ones they needed to learn now but also that these words would continue to be useful. The assurance that the mastery of the year's work in spelling would not be a worthless job but one which they could undertake with the assurance that there would be no waste of time and effort in learning words which they would seldom if ever use, appealed to the children. Evidences of their appreciation of this knowledge may be found in the few brief excerpts from stenographic reports taken during the discussion periods.

Pupil: "Toward the middle of the year we got to thinking more of spelling and realized how important it was and so we got down to business."

Pupil: "We sort of realized that what we do in spelling we do as long as we live. Almost any place we go we will have to know how to spell."

Pupil: "We have to know how to spell these words. We almost have to realize soon now in these grades that spelling is very important because in high school you have themes to write, . . . and spelling counts off in that, too."

Pupil: "I write quite a few letters to people and they are practically made up of these words."

Pupil: "Right now when we write a summary or letter, we still write words we learned in the first grade."

Pupil: "Just like *and*, you write that in first grade, and you use it still. And just like *seen* for instance. Well now don't you use *people* every day and you used *people* when you were in first grade."

Teacher: "Yes, but you didn't learn to spell it then."

Pupil: "No, when we got to third grade, then we learned to write *people*, and it was a great help to know how to spell *people* in writing, spelling, compositions, social science, hygiene, science, almost anything you can think of you use *people* and you write that word all your life."

A second method of developing morale was to meet individual differences in spelling ability. This was done in two ways: (1) by grouping the class and differentiating the assignment, and (2) by an individualized method of study.

In order to determine the spelling ability of each pupil and of the class in general, a test was given each semester before any daily teaching was begun. This preliminary test was composed of fifty words systematically sampled from the 320 words which were to be learned each semester. The percentage of accuracy with which a child could spell the

words in the tests, previous to study, automatically placed him in one of three spelling groups designated as the excused group (100% accuracy), the accelerated group (94-98% accuracy), and the regular class group (below 94%). The first semester there was one child in the excused group, seven in the accelerated group, and seventeen in the regular class group. The second semester there were no children in the excused group, three in the accelerated group and twenty-one in the regular class group. This method of grouping permitted the children in the accelerated group to progress at their own rate of learning and left the teacher free to concentrate her efforts toward improving the spelling of the regular class group.

This method of grouping, which permitted the accelerated group to work independently, resulted in a greater enthusiasm in completing the task set to be done. The group required an average of three and one-half hours or fourteen spelling periods of fifteen minutes each in which to learn, to a one hundred per cent accuracy, the first semester spelling list. This meant that each child had approximately fifty-four periods of fifteen minutes each, or thirteen and one-half hours of free time in which to carry on activities other than spelling. The second semester the group had sixty periods, or a total of fifteen hours of free time. This fact in itself served as a stimulus to good spelling.

Individual differences in spelling ability were also met by utilizing an individual method of study. The three special features of spelling as taught in the University Elementary School are: (1) the use of the test-study method, (2) the use of a specific method for learning to spell a word, and (3) a systematic method for recall and relearning of words.

The children were trained and encouraged to take an active part in the diagnostic and remedial work involved in the three spelling methods referred to. The pupils were taught: (1) to observe words closely during all pronunciation exercises, (2) to find and check their own errors on daily tests, (3) to study

only the words misspelled in each test, (4) to be critical of letter formations and to practice on their individual letter difficulties on spelling study days, (5) to use the method taught in learning how to spell a word, (6) to check through their tablets in order to note the most frequent types of error responsible for misspellings, (7) to "clean-up" all Friday errors to a one hundred per cent accuracy. The teacher believed that the gradual and consistent spelling improvement attained was the result of a direct attack upon individual spelling difficulties.

A third purpose basic to the morale which was developed was that of establishing the pupils' belief in the possibility of continued success. This was done by informing them periodically of the progress they had made subsequent to the diagnostic and remedial measures used.

The first month of school the teacher endeavored to determine the probable obstacles in the way of correct spelling in the group which she was teaching. Such information was secured from four sources: (1) the report of the school nurse, (2) the personal talks with pupils, (3) the close supervision of the spelling study-periods, and (4) the tabulation of individual types of errors from the spelling tablets. The information secured from these four sources was utilized toward remedying individual spelling difficulties.

As a diagnostic and remedial measure the teacher spent from ten to twenty minutes each Monday and Wednesday in checking the spelling tests of the regular class group to determine the nature of the individual errors. As she checked through the tablets she wrote on a card the names of pupils whom she would help the next day, and she indicated beside each name the type of error to be corrected. This specific information previous to the Tuesday and Thursday study period enabled the teacher to proceed more rapidly and efficiently in helping those pupils whose spelling errors had indicated the need for a definite type of help. A sample of the teacher's diagnostic card follows:

- A. Pronounce the Monday list of words aloud as a class exercise, calling more attention to pronunciations.
- B. Announce general difficulties to the class
  1. A rather general letter formation difficulty was writing the word *friend* with two *e*'s and dotting the first *e*, but calling the letter *i*, as *fréend*.
  2. Homonym difficulties: *seam* (seem), *marry* (merry). Have words again used in sentences.
  3. Word *enough* missed by over half the class. Evidently a hard word to be mastered.
  4. Too frequent retracing of letters.
- C. Special help
 

Pupil 6—Failed to write five words, Why? Talk it over.

Pupil 7—Still writes too small (hold pencil more firmly), retracing letters, repronounce words with him. Big "clean-up" job—give encouragement.

Pupil 10—Continued omission of letters—especially letter *e*. Stress observing letter placement in syllables of word.

Pupil 11—Gross misspelling, tries to spell by sound. Have her pronounce her misspelled words after me. Encourage her.

Pupil 12—Why so frequent retracing of letters? Talk it over.

Pupil 13—Spells by sound, *bace* (base). Help on *enoth* (enough), *fale* (fail), *marry* (merry).

Pupil 15—Illegibility, too many letters retraced for clearness. Sharpen pencil.

Pupil 17—Not writing word asked for, listen more attentively to sentences. Wrote *afraid* (friend) and *failed* (fail).

Another way the teacher interested the pupils in their spelling improvement was to show them, in a concrete way, the progress

they were making. This was accomplished chiefly through the aid of individual progress graphs, class progress graphs, class progress charts, a definite grading system, and informal class discussions.

The children made individual progress graphs on which they recorded daily progress, either in terms of the number of words spelled correctly on each of the five weekly tests, or in terms of the number of words not learned. Such a record enabled the child to see his daily and weekly progress in a concrete and interesting manner. Several times during the year the children made individual progress graphs in work type reading periods.

A pride and an interest in class progress was concurrently stressed with that of individual progress. During the first school period the teacher posted on the bulletin board two permanent class progress records: one a comparative bar graph, the other a comparative line graph, each showing the per cent of accuracy made weekly on both new and review words. These graphs were filled in by the teacher. The progress graph section of the bulletin board was a most popular corner.

A scoring system used in the Elementary School (1928-1929) established definite letter grades or scores for a fixed number of Friday misspellings. This evaluation enabled a pupil to interpret his progress in terms of a letter grade at the close of any given week. The pupils expressed satisfaction in having so definite a marking system.

The informal discussions proved invaluable interest factors in the development of a morale.

To summarize very briefly a few evidences of spelling improvement achieved by the Fourth Grade pupils, the following facts may be pointed out:

1. At the beginning of the first semester the lowest one-third of the class received scores, on the test previous to study, which ranged from 36% to 70%, with a class median of 82%. At the close of the semester the class median was 94% and only two children received scores below 92%. Those two children receiving scores of 66% and 88%. Even here, however, each child made a gain of 30% and 4% respectively.

2. At the beginning of the second semester the lower one-half of the class received scores, on the test previous to study, which ranged from 28% - 70% with a class median of 74%. At the close of the semester the class median was 98% and only three children received scores below 94%. Those three children received scores of 76%, 84%, and 88%. In each case the gain made was 48%, 38%, and 42% respectively.

3. During the year the class as a whole noticeably reduced the average number of Friday misspellings per child, from twenty-three misspellings out of 640 attempts the first semester, to nine misspellings out of 640 attempts the second semester.

4. The regular class group, from which seven superior spellers had been eliminated the first semester, and from which three superior spellers had been eliminated the second semester, spelled to an A. M. of 97.5% or to a median of 98% accuracy the 720 words spelled during the entire year.

This study clearly proved that children as young as nine years were led to respond enthusiastically to the fundamental needs of spelling. No sugar-coating devices nor home work schemes were employed. A whole-hearted, straight-forward presentation of the spelling problem proved a sufficient incentive to sustain a vigorous interest in the subject throughout the entire year.

# Language as Behavior

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(Continued from December)

JOHN NOW enters upon the third stage of his language learning. In the first stage, impelled by some stimulus, he manipulates his speech organs; and the manipulation is the "be-all and the end-all": the act is purposeless, aimless, without intention or objective. If anything follows, John fails to see that his speech has been the cause of it. In the second stage, he begins to see that he can get certain definite results by certain speech behavior: from "out there" somewhere, come rewards—and punishments. This is probably the beginning of John's conscious intellectual life: the recognition of cause and effect.

## *The Third Stage*

The third stage in John's progress in language-learning is the stage of imitation. "All forms of expressive activity have their roots in native equipment directed toward the imitation of the activities of others."<sup>1</sup>

John has uttered many sounds, and perhaps he has made connections (or, rather, connections have been made) in his mind between the muscular movements he makes and the sounds he hears. Now he begins to discern relationships between the sounds that other persons make and the sounds that he makes, and he begins to try to utter the sounds he hears others make. Those about him are eager and zealous in setting before him examples of speech, they encourage him to make the sounds, and pat him and pet him when he succeeds. From the "Outerness," people swim into his ken, enter into his field of sight and consciousness: he sees them move

their lips, he hears sounds. Little by little, through imitation, he learns to manipulate his vocal organs with skill and facility, deliberately trying to articulate definite sounds. He has been babbling, muttering, chattering, using "natural" language;<sup>2</sup> now he begins to learn a mechanical language: French, or German or English, or, as in this case, American.

Nature has bequeathed to John as a part of his biological heritage, language equipment and language impulses and probably the tendency to imitate—at least to imitate the specific forms of any activity which is in general instinctive.<sup>3</sup> But it has not bequeathed language to him; that is a part of his social heritage, and must be learned, earned. Left to himself, John would probably develop for himself a language of a sort, somewhat more expressive and extensive than the language of the lower animals, consisting of a system of ejaculations, grunts, growls, chatterings, and various noises. But he is not left to himself. He has been ushered into a world that has developed a highly complex language, an elaborate and intricate system of artificial symbols; and John must learn this system of symbols. The mastery of this language probably presents more difficulties and requires more effort, more time, and more intelligence than any other feat that John is ever to be called upon to perform in his entire lifetime.

Fortunately, John doesn't realize the magnitude of the task confronting him. All he realizes (and this but slowly and gradually, as his little world unfolds and defines itself before him and as his maturing and ever-

<sup>1</sup>Benson, Lough, Skinner and West, *PSYCHOLOGY FOR TEACHERS*. New York, 1926: p. 239.

<sup>2</sup>This is what Jespersen calls his "little" language. Jespersen, *LANGUAGE*, London, 1922: p. 103.

<sup>3</sup>See Cameron, *EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY*, New York, 1927: pp. 191-192.

widening circle of activities expands) is, that language (first his own natural language and then the social, mother-and-father-spoken language he hears and is led to imitate) is a tool, a means to an end, a convenient way of getting what he wants, a useful form of behavior which it behooves him to learn. Heretofore our baby's expressional activities, language among others, have been spontaneous and reflex; they now begin to be impulsive and deliberate, directed (at first vaguely and uncertainly, then with increasing purposefulness and definiteness) toward specific objects and objectives.<sup>4</sup>

Little by little the multitudinous, inchoate noises and sounds of life become discrete and separately recognizable; little by little the aimless, inarticulate chatter of the infant changes into the meaningful, articulate speech of the child. With John Homo, a typical baby, as a representative of babyhood in general, let us see how this change comes about.

John has a soft ball, which is delightfully squeezable and which emits a funny whistling sound. John has learned, in part by chance manipulation and in part by the assistance of mysterious hands from "outside," to elicit the pleasure from the squeeziness and the wheeziness of the ball. Every time the ball is placed in his hands, he hears some one say *ball*; and the sound *ball* gradually becomes a part of his concept of *ball-ness*. That is, the neurones connected with the nerves and muscles involved in handling the ball become associated with the neurones connected with the auditory sensations coming from the spoken word *ball*.

As John plays with the ball, he utters sounds—for no reason except that manipulating his vocal organs is a part of his total behavior activity. On a certain day, partly because of random vocal movements and partly because of his tendency to imitate, John utters the word *ball*, or, more likely, *bā*. Probably the recognition of this sound as identical with the sound he has already heard gives John a pleasant feeling of achievement,

and his pleasure is enhanced by the manifestations of delight on the part of father and mother, as they cuddle him and coddle him. After many periods of alternating success and failure, John always says *ball* when he perceives it or grasps it or plays with it. That is, the sensations connected with the muscular action involved in articulating *ball* become a part of the general concept of *ball-ness* that has been built up by seeing the ball, squeezing it, hearing it squeek and by hearing the sound *ball* as made by others.

Now on a certain day, when John is alone in his crib the ball bounces out on to the floor of the room. It has frequently fallen to the floor of the crib and John has learned to stoop down and pick it up. Well, he tries to get it now by the same method; but it is out of his reach. Having tried all his tricks, he falls back on an old never-failing device: he fetches a good lusty yell, which brings some one post haste to his side. But alas! this person doesn't know what John wants: his yells, like his reachings and gestures, are meaningless and vain. And then suddenly the memory-image of the missing ball, evokes from John's lips the word *ball*. At once the ball is restored to him.

Gradually, from this and countless other experiences, John Homo learns three facts about his world. He learns first: that everything he sees or senses has a heard and a spoken sound attached to it: simple objects and motions (involving nouns and verbs); qualities and limitations (involving adjectives and adverbs); substitutes for people and things (involving pronouns). Separate prepositions and conjunctions he has no present use for: they have to do with sentences—and John has now no need for sentences. But he has for words. John becomes a second Adam: he gives everything a name.<sup>5</sup>

He learns in the second place, that in the absence-from-sight of the things itself, images

<sup>4</sup>See Benson et al. op. cit., pp. 238-239.

<sup>5</sup>Children's vocabularies are larger and grow more rapidly than most people realize. Observations cited in Watson, *PSYCHOLOGY FROM THE STANDPOINT OF A BEHAVIORIST*, p. 341, state that nine children at the age of one year had an average vocabulary of 9½ words; 23 of them at twenty-four to twenty-eight months used on the average 441 words.

of the thing reside in his consciousness, can be called up by stimuli and by indirect associations, and that *the name of the thing is also the name of the image*. I fancy that this is one of the tremendous, Columbus-like discoveries of John's babyhood. It would seem to be the beginnings of his power of abstraction.

And he learns in the third place, that these sounds he has learned to utter possess, in certain respects and under certain circumstances, more potency, more usefulness than any other activity he can engage in. He has already learned that other motor activities of his can bring certain results, and he has a gamut of activities which he practices: crawling, which enables him to get within reaching distance of things he wants; smiling and cooing, which bring down upon him pleasant looks and sounds and caresses; various cries, which lead to being "tended to," being fed, etc; patting hands, waving "by-by"—all forms of activity and each connected with specific, dependable reactions and "come-backs." By learning language, the social language, intelligible to others, John has but added another type of behavior to his list. It is in no wise different from the other types, either in the manner in which it is learned or the manner in which it is used.

When the ball falls from John's hands on to the floor of his crib, he engages in a motor activity to get it back. When the ball falls outside the crib, he merely engages in another motor activity to get it back: he says *ball*. Speech is thus *an extension of John's range of movements*: it is like another arm, an arm long enough to reach down to the floor and retrieve the ball.

Rooted in this simple (?) act, branching up from this ball-experience grows all John's future language development. When, later on, he uses language to persuade his mother to let him buy a new ball (perhaps a baseball), he is doing precisely what he did when in the crib he yelled *ball*; and when, still later, he writes a letter to Spalding Brothers enclosing money and ordering a football, he

is again employing language to get what he wants.

Language to get what he wants! John learns to engage in language activity as he engages in walking, running, dressing himself, skating, swimming, driving an automobile, working in an office, making love: it is basically a physical activity directed toward a specific objective, to be learned and to be used like any other activity. The only difference is, that some of these activities which John has learned or will learn can be carried on in solitude (dressing himself, skating or driving an automobile), while language ranks clearly with those activities which are altogether social, which are carried on only in the presence of, in co-operation with others. John, while still a prattling infant, talks to himself a good deal; but when he learns that language is employed to get in touch with other persons, to communicate with them, influence them, get something from them or to do something to them—why John would as soon think of playing baseball by himself or dancing by himself as of using language by himself.

\* Language for the infant and the child John Homo is and remains intrinsically a pragmatic mode of social behavior: he uses it, whether he is conscious of it or not, to secure certain definite results, to satisfy his wants. And the fact that as John grows older, his wants multiply and his motives for employing language become correspondingly varied and intricate, should not blind us to the permanence and unity of the language process: it remains essentially the same useful social activity.

### *Written Language*

Nor is the situation basically different when John Homo learns to write. Writing is merely a variant of speech. Just as speech is an extension of the infant's other physical and muscular activities, so writing is an extension of speech.

And the psychology of learning to write parallels closely the learning to talk. To be

sure, writing is not natural in one sense: the equipment for writing is not a part of one's physical organism: paper, pencil, pen and ink, typewriter, etc. are external, so to speak, they are artificial. But there is nothing peculiar about that: that whistling ball John played with is external and artificial too. The important point, psychologically and sociologically speaking, is, that John has the organs to manipulate writing materials; that these materials are convenient, and cheap; that writing is a common, casual occurrence in John's environment; that John's parents, older brothers and sisters, playmates, teachers, all expect John to learn to write, bring social pressure to bear upon him, lead him to want to write.

I shall not here attempt to trace in detail the process of learning to write. John has learned to speak: he knows how to manipulate his vocal organs to produce words which will effect other persons, which will enable him to obtain what he wants. He knows (though of course he isn't as philosophical—and long-winded—about it as I am in this paper) that words are symbols of images, sensations, feelings, ideas, etc. Now he learns that *written* words are capable of doing the same thing: that *ball-written*, like *ball-spoken*, stands for *ball* itself, for *ball-ness*. And, as he has had to learn how to manipulate his vocal organs, so he must learn how to manipulate his "writing organs." Normally, he begins with aimless, vague, un-coordinated movements, holding his pencil awkwardly, scrawling and scribbling up and down and across the paper or slate. Then, constant activity, the success of chance movements, assistance from older people, imitating specimens set before him—all the usual learning procedure follows. As he has had to learn the artificial mechanics of speech, articulation, accent, pronunciation, inflection, cadence, and the like, now he must learn the writing mechanics: hand-writing, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and all the rest. But throughout, if those who are guiding John's

learning are wisely helpful, he is assisted in his learning to write by the parallelisms between speaking (which he has already learned) and writing (which he is now learning).

The chief practical difference between John's learning to speak and his learning to write is that, under the circumstances that usually prevail today, John's efforts to learn to write are not prompted, are not accelerated and expedited by a continual, earnest, strong desire on John's part. He has had many instances of the value (to him) of learning to speak: he realizes that the ability to speak is of personal and practical worth—he can do things with it, get things by it. But the practical, the actual value of writing is not so obvious. "Oh, yes, it's nice to be able to write," we may imagine John as saying; "it's nice, I suppose; everyone seems to want me to do it, teacher says I must, and I suppose when I'm a man I'll *have* to do it. Everyone makes such a bother about it that I guess I may as well give in—but I can't see what I get out of it."

John, of course, doesn't actually say this; but if he did he would be hitting pretty close to the truth. For as we manage—or mismanage—things today, we *compel* John Homo and the rest of the children to learn to write long before their natural reaction to the stimuli and situations of life would *impel* them to do so, before the strong, urgent motives for writing begin to come into play. As we usually set the stage, writing is not, for the youthful John Homo, a mode of social behavior, it is not much more than a set exercise. For the older child, for the man, certain types of writing, certain activities of writing are as socially desirable and necessary as speech and other kinds of behavior and conduct: circumstances force him to learn to write, reward him if he writes effectively, penalize him if he fails to do so.

Of course, the fact that written language is as truly a mode of social behavior as is speech is concealed somewhat by the fact that usually when one writes, he is not in a social *milieu*: he is usually by himself, sitting silent

# Recent Data on Children's Interests in Poetry\*

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FOR THE past ten years the writer has been working and playing with the idea of children's interests in poetry. By interest is meant not the whim of the moment but a liking that is somewhat permanent in nature. Bouglé says that "Wherever found, a value is permanent possibility of satisfaction." Since value is said to be a function of interest, the interest itself should be capable of definition in the same terms. It is in this fashion, then, that the factor of interest should be considered throughout this discussion.

Although the idea is disclaimed that child interest is the Open Sesame that will result in the demand for more poetry in the elementary school, nevertheless it is a factor which ranks equally with ease of comprehension, literary merit and moralness in the selection of poems for children. A poem may possess these three latter characteristics in superlative degree, but unless the writer has been able to flavor it with action, human interest and imagination, children will not show active liking for it.

How are children's interests in poetry to be determined? The methods that have been used include:

1. Questionnaire to children
2. Questionnaire to adults on their childhood reading
3. Study of library withdrawals
4. Observation and direct experiment.

The last of these four methods, approached in a variety of ways, has come to be regarded as probably the best means of determining child interest. Miss Dunn, in her experiment

based upon paired comparisons, included some poem material. Huber and Bruner exposed children in any given group to a maximum of sixty poems, without controlling the method of presentation.

In the most recent experiment conducted in the Grand Rapids schools during the years 1928-30, the writer has used the method of direct presentation of poems in groups of ten each day, with the teacher reading aloud to the children as audience so that every child has a chance at all of the poems and every poem has a chance with every child. The experiment has been run in grades three, four, five and six.

Among the questions set up as ones to which answers could and should be secured through the experiment were the following:

1. What poems will children choose when they are exposed to a large number of poems selected chiefly on the basis of occurrence in anthologies, with literary merit and recency as important factors?
2. Can a list of poems be formulated large enough to exhaust the possibilities for poems of interest to children?
3. Is there variation from grade to grade in the rating of poems or do they have equal appeal in all grades?
4. Are there certain poems which tend to rank high in all grades? Low in all grades?
5. Does the type of standard used by children in rating poems influence their choices?

\*Paper presented before the Elementary Section of the National Council of Teachers of English, Cleveland, November 29, 1930.

6. Does the order in which poems are read affect choices?
7. Are children consistent enough in their rating of poems for the conclusion to be drawn that if a poem is given a high rating it has value for children?
8. Do children tend to agree with teachers in their rating of poems as high or low?

The experimenter chose four hundred poems from those that had ranked high in previous experiments, such as "Leetla Humpy Jeem," by Daly; from those which had appeared in recent anthologies of poetry such as "The Potatoes' Dance," by Lindsay; and a few from course of study sources such as Longfellow's "The Village Blacksmith." Thirty-seven of the four hundred occurred in Dr. Bamesberger's compilation of poems based upon fifty courses of study. Eighty-two of the four hundred poems were used in the Huber-Bruner experiment. As representative of the poems included in the list of four hundred are "A Christmas Carol," by Sara Teasdale and "Lullaby," by Paul Lawrence Dunbar.

The experimenter arranged the four hundred poems in order from best to poorest, in terms of her opinion, for each of grades three, four, five and six. These ratings were then averaged to get a combination rating of the poems for use in the experiment. Then by a method of sampling, groups of ten were built, each representing the total range. These groups of ten were then built into eight groups of fifty poems each. Several groups of third, fourth, fifth and sixth grade children heard all of the four hundred poems during an eight weeks' period. Certain other check groups in each of these grades heard a sampling of fifty poems during a week's time. One of the groups heard the fifty in reverse order, another used a different type of preference card, still another heard the poems re-read a month after the first reading.

Each child who heard the four hundred poems was given for each day's use a preference sheet on which were the titles of the poems for that day and a rating card which

he kept throughout the experiment. This rating card contained the following points:

1. This is one of the best poems I have ever heard or read
2. This is a very good poem
3. This poem is only fairly good
4. This poem is tiresome to listen to
5. This is one of the worst poems I have ever heard or read.

After the teacher read the poem each child wrote on his preference sheet opposite the title of the poem, the number of the statement which he thought applied best. If he wished, he gave a reason for his choice. These sheets were collected after each day's reading. Other measures, too detailed to describe here, were used also.

The results have been tabulated in the form of an average rating for each poem in each of the grades three, four, five and six. The arithmetic mean of these average ratings, the standard deviation and the probable error of the mean have been computed for the distribution in each grade. Correlations have been run between the average ratings of the groups who heard the whole four hundred poems and the check groups previously mentioned. The probable error of the rating has been computed in each case. The results seem to indicate the following conclusions to be drawn in answer to the questions set up:

1. Children tend to choose poems which are characterized by action, child experience, humor, dialect and repetition. These are qualities represented in the results of previous experiments, which still persist as evidenced by such choices as Riley's "The Bear Story," Guiterman's "A Boy and Pup," "Robinson Crusoe's Story," by Carryl, Daly's "Between Two Loves," and "Lullaby," by Dunbar.
2. The present list of four hundred poems has not exhausted the possibilities for poems of interest to children. The arithmetic mean of the average ratings for the four hundred poems is 1.97 in grade five, where poems received the highest

average rating. This means that although the four hundred poems as a whole can be classified as "very good poems," they are not the best. Children tended to rate poems 1, 2 or 3 on the scale rather than to use items 4 and 5.

3. It was expected that there would be variation in ratings given from grade to grade. Especially is this true when comparison is made between grades three and six, although there is a fair correlation here of .413. For example, "Little Snail," by Conkling, which ranks just next to the top fourth in grade three, is third from the bottom in the list of four hundred in grade six.
4. There are certain poems which tend to rank high in all four grades. An analysis of the 100 poems in the upper fourth of these grades shows twenty-four poems common to all four grades, and forty poems common to three grades, making a total of sixty-four out of one hundred that tend to rank high. Certain authors are repeatedly represented in this list of favorites, among them Riley, Milne, Lear, Guiterman and Daly. A superficial inspection of those ranking lowest shows a similar situation.
5. The type of standard used in rating poems does not seem to affect choices appreciably. The correlations of the average ratings given by the group who heard the four hundred poems with those of the group who heard fifty poems which they ranked by a different type of rating card shows a correlation of .75 or more in all grades except three.
6. The data on order in which poems were read shows that in grades three and five the order of reading made little differ-

ence, but in grades four and six the correlations were marked but not high. The evidence is not conclusive on this point.

7. Children judged as a group are highly consistent in their ratings of poems as shown by the results from the groups who heard the fifty poems re-read in a month's time. The correlations range from .823 in grade three to .922 in grade six. But when the ratings of individuals are analyzed the conclusion must be drawn, with respect to grade six as well as grade three, that some individuals are consistent and others are not.
8. Children do not tend to agree with teachers on the ratings of poems in any marked degree. The correlations range here from .330 in grade three to .474 in grade four. For example, in the group of fifty poems rated by pupils and by teachers, "The Bear Story" is probably the children's favorite, while with teacher's "The Sandpiper" ranks highest. This result should furnish food for thought.

It should be kept in mind that choice or preference as related to interest is a highly personal thing. It is much more difficult to deal with objectively than is arithmetic where an answer is either right or wrong. However, if the implications of this study are evaluated and considered by teachers and course of study makers, the result will surely be a more active desire on the part of children to get acquainted with poetry as evidenced by library withdrawals, purchase of books of poems, voluntary reading of poems, and attempts to make original poems. The present aim of the elementary school should be to develop on the part of children a permanent interest in poem material as one outlet for the wise use of leisure time.

# The Writing Vocabulary of Third Grade Children

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THE ultimate aim of education is to give children the training which will help them to attain success and happiness in their present and in their future lives. To accomplish this, educators must consider the permanent and important needs of adult life and the present needs of the children in and out of school.

According to Miss Annie Moore of Teachers College, Columbia University, written language is employed for three main purposes: To record interesting and important facts and events; To communicate with people at a distance; and To create new values of a more or less original sort such as stories, sketches, verse, plays. The school should then provide opportunity for the fulfillment of these purposes.

Teachers of English realize that the spelling of words hampers the children in written expression. The words included in the spelling lesson for a grade should be those which will meet the child's present and future needs.

Many investigations have been made of the writing vocabularies of adults' and of children's themes, but the adequacy of these investigations as a basis for the selection of spelling lists is doubted by some educators. The investigations based upon children's themes do not include all types of writing which children should do and the topics used have often brought about a list of words which does not represent the child's needs as well as do adult word lists.

A study of the vocabulary of third grade children's written work was made by the writer of this article under the direction of

Dr. Ernest Horn of the University of Iowa to help solve the problem of meeting the child's present and future needs in spelling.

For three years the writer collected all written work done by three groups of third grade children under her supervision. A total of 1678 written compositions, consisting of letters, reports, original verse, announcements, book reviews, records, notes, and articles for a newspaper was obtained. Of these compositions, 1151 were letters. The vocabulary obtained is therefore heavily weighted with words taken from children's letters. As letter writing is the most common form of writing done in life these words should be crucial ones.

All the words but proper nouns and titles of books were tabulated. Misspelled words were tabulated in their correct forms, but a record was kept of the misspellings. The words used in the closings and greetings of the letters were tabulated separately from the other words. In the 82,694 running words counted, 2915 different words were found.

These words were compared with the list given in Dr. Thorndike's THE TEACHER'S WORD BOOK and with list given in Dr. Horn's A BASIC WRITING VOCABULARY to determine the overlap of the children's writing vocabulary with the writing lists of adults. It was found that 521 words occur both within the first thousand of the Horn list and of the Thorndike list. As these words occur in three lists they are very important in one's reading vocabulary, the writing of an adult, and in the writing of third grade children.

A total of 815 words were found to be included in the first thousand of the Thorndike list. There are 719 words in this study that are in the first thousand of the Horn list. These words were not always ranked in the first thousand of both lists, perhaps because of differences in the type of material examined by the two studies and the inclusion of derivatives under basic words by Dr. Thorndike in his list.

In the 2,915 different words there are 126 words that are not in the Thorndike and Horn lists. These words have a very low frequency of occurrence; only 19 of them have a frequency of five or more. As these words were used in connection with other subjects of the course of study, the list is a special vocabulary. Some words of this study occur in one list and not in the other. There are 135 words that are in the Thorndike list, but not in the Horn list, and 53 words that are in the Horn list, but not in the Thorndike list. This difference like the difference in ranking, may be due to the different sources of material used by the two studies.

As there are 84.8% of the words of this investigation included in the Thorndike list and 82.1% included in the Horn list, the overlap of the list obtained in this study with the two studies used for comparison may be said to be large. The use of a vocabulary based upon adult needs as a basis for the selection of words for spelling lists for children if frequency, cruciality, and the difficulty of the words are considered, is justifiable.

As Dr. Horn's list was based upon the writings of adults, a child's writing then will include a high percent of the words used by adults in writing. Since Dr. Thorndike used much reading material in his study, the reading vocabulary of children is an important factor in the writing they do in school. Children of a third grade who are given an enriched course of study will have need for many words which they cannot spell as their reading and speaking vocabularies are larger than their spelling vocabulary. Special provision must be made by the teachers for the

learning of these words in other subjects or the teacher must spell the words for the children when these words are called into use.

The writer has selected 355 of the most frequently used words found in the bodies of the letters and the compositions and 14 of the most frequently used words found in the greetings and the closings of the letters. Those words which had a frequency of error of 20% or more are marked by an asterisk.

WORDS MOST FREQUENTLY USED BY THIRD GRADE CHILDREN IN LETTERS

about	* brought	* does	going
across	* building	doing	good
after	* buildings	* don't	got
* again	* burned	door	grade
all	but	down	* ground
along	by	each	had
am	call	* Easter	hard
an	called	eat	has
and	came	eats	* have
* animals	* campus	egg	* having
another	can	eggs	he
* any	* candles	end	head
* appreciate	* cannot	* enjoy	help
are	cave	* enjoyed	helped
* arithmetic	chairs	* enough	her
* around	chalk	* every	* here
art	* children	* excuse	him
as	* Christmas	* exhibit	his
* assembly	clan	* February	home
at	clans	few	homes
* away	class	fine	hope
baby	clay	find	house
back	clean	* finished	how
ball	close	fire	hunt
* baseball	* clothes	first	* hunted
* because	* clothing	floor	* hunting
bed	coal	food	l
bees	* cocoon	for	if
before	cold	found	I'm
bench	come	fourth	in
* better	comes	* Friday	into
* bison	* coming	from	* iodine
big	cook	fun	it
birds	* cotton	gas	its
* birthday	* could	gave	* just
boats	* dance	* geography	keep
book	day	get	* kelp
books	days	getting	* killed
boy	* decided	* girl	kind
boys	* deer	girls	* know
* branches	did	give	lamp
bring	* different	glad	land
brother	do	go	lard

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# Editorial

## THE UNFAILING INTEREST

IN the debate between the educators who follow the trend of children's interests, and those who build toward goals selected from the requirements of adult life much middle ground is overlooked. Either group, going to the extreme with its ideas, is manifestly wrong, and for the same reason. Each assumes that the child, in his normal experiences, does not tend to discover the most important facts of social life at higher and higher levels of maturity, and to adjust himself to these. After all, the child and his elders are living in the same social environment. Furthermore, both he and they are much the same kind of social beings. Add to this the fact that the child is, if anything, much more sensitive to his surroundings, and much truer in his responses to strong social stimuli than are maturer persons, and combines with his natural imitativeness a spirit of playfulness that finds pleasure in copying even the most elaborate conventions of adult life, and it becomes evident that the child is peculiarly well fitted to assimilate the important features of adult society.

A great part of children's play is direct imitation of established customs and acts of a conventionalized society. It is true, of course, that choices may be made in a haphazard way, and that order and sequence may be lost in random selection. Yet what children select on the basis of their natural interests is as inclusive of the details of adult life as it is of child life. It seems almost ridiculous that educators, whose business is pri-

marily that of knowing the world of young people, should be so slow to recognize this fact. For example, practically all of the toys known to children are copied from adult patterns, and more often than not are based upon interests which are vitally characteristic of adult life. The doll is the symbol of the family; the toy motor-truck has had its toy prototype of transportation vehicles as far as there are archaeological relics of the ancient world. So it goes. Almost all that the child delights in that is concrete and material has its source of interest in the life of the world of adults.

After all, the main ways in which children and adults differ is in the orderliness with which responses are made to surrounding interests, and in the degree of calloused indifference to things that are essentially interesting. It is quite evident, therefore, that the educator who diligently studies children's interests will find himself moving in the direction of adult life rather than away from it.

This problem is complicated by the fact that children's interests are much richer than those of grown-ups. This is almost bewilderingly true. It becomes necessary to make selections of experiences and interests which have their counterparts in conventional society. To do this is not supremely difficult. The supreme difficulties lie rather in giving these selections orderly sequence in the child's activities without breaking down the growth processes which are slowly developing him through ordinary experience.

## COURSE OF STUDY IN THE MECHANICS OF COMPOSITION

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evaluation of textbook emphasis, in working out the readjustment of such textbook em-

phasis, and in research involving the checking of children's errors and usages. In fact

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## LANGUAGE AS BEHAVIOR

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at a desk or table, making marks on paper. This looks like an individual, non-social process, largely mental. Nevertheless, if the writing is a genuine, motive-inspired activity, this is truly a practical, physical mode of behavior, "outward-going," *overt*, carried on for certain definite effects. The person (except when he is writing private diaries or accounts) is writing *for* someone, *to* someone, he has an "audience," a reader or circle of

readers. When John Homo, seeing a ball in the hands of a smaller boy, snatches it from him, surely that is activity, behavior. When John, now a little older and more *polite*—or *politic*—seeing a ball in the hands of another boy, asks for it—surely, that is activity, behavior. And when John writes a note to a boy sitting on the other side of the class room, asking him if he may have his ball at recess—what is that but activity, behavior?

(To be concluded)

## THE WRITING VOCABULARY OF THIRD GRADE CHILDREN

(Continued from page 22)

last	men	one	* Saturday	story	things	* tried	were
learned	miss	only	saw	* strange	think	* two	what
leaves	Miss	open	school	* studying	third	up	when
left	* Monday	or	* science	* summer	this	us	* where
let	more	other	sea	* Sunday	* thought	* use	* which
* letter	* morning	our	see	take	three	* used	* while
letters	moss	out	* second	* tallow	* through	very	will
light	* moth	over	send	* teacher	* Thursday	* visit	winter
like	mother	paper	sent	tell	till	* want	wish
liked	much	* pencil	she	thank	time	* wanted	* women
little	must	* people	show	* Thanksgiving	times	was	worm
live	my	* piece	* showed	that	to	water	* would
lived	* name	place	sick	the	* today	way	* write
long	near	plant	side	* theater	* together	we	writing
look	needles	play	skin	* their	told	* weapons	yes
lost	new	* played	skinned	them	* too	* Wednesday	* yesterday
lots	* next	playing	snow	then	took	week	you
made	nice	please	so	* there	tree	well	your
make	night	* point	* soap	they	trees	went	
making	no	* poster	some				
man	not	pretty	* sometimes				
many	now	* public	soon				
mark	* o'clock	put	sorry				
marking	of	read	spelling				
me	off	river	spring				
* meeting	old	room	* stick				
melted	on	said	sticks				

### FOURTEEN WORDS SELECTED FROM LIST OBTAINED FROM GREETINGS AND CLOSINGS OF LETTERS

dear	Miss	sir	very
* friend	* Mr.	third	your
grade	my	truly	yours
lovingly	* sincerely		